

MEMO TO: City Council

**C.16**

FROM: Rosemarie Ives, Mayor

DATE: April 19, 2005

SUBJECT: **Approve the Park Board's Recommendation to Dedicate and Name the Auditorium at the Redmond Sr. Center in Honor of Past Council Member, Fred Meitzer**

**I. RECOMMENDED ACTION**

Motion to approve the Park Board's recommendation to officially name and dedicate the auditorium at the Redmond Sr. Center in honor of past Council member, Fred Meitzer.

**II. DEPARTMENT CONTACT PERSONS**

Danny Hopkins, Director of Parks and Recreation	556-2310
Tim Cox, Parks Planning Manager	556-2334
Tom Trueblood, Recreation Manager	556-2315
Lori Snodgrass, Park Board Chair	556-2311

**III. DESCRIPTION**

Background

Mr. Meitzer passed away in April 2003. He served on the City Council from 1984 through 1987 and as part of the City Council was a staunch advocate for the Performing Arts and senior programs. He was instrumental in the Council's decision to allocate an additional \$180,000 to the development of the auditorium, as well as, designing the stage, theater and dressing room areas of the multi-purpose room. He also directed the first play, The Silver Whistle, performed on stage in the auditorium. Due to Mr. Meitzer's extensive work in drama and his life long love of the theater he shared his vision to expand the, then planned "smaller theater", into the reality of a larger more expansive one.

Process

Mrs. Frances Meitzer approached the Parks and Recreation Director, Danny Hopkins, with a request to take into consideration dedicating and naming the Sr. Center's existing multi-purpose room after her late husband, Fred Meitzer. After reviewing background information brought forth by staff, and under due process, Director Hopkins instructed staff to move forward with the request and present the information to the Sr. Center Advisory Board for their thoughts and recommendation.

In November 2003, the Sr. Advisory Board discussed this proposal and unanimously agreed to pass their approval along to the Park Board.

In June 2004 the Park Board took a unanimous vote to recommend and carry forth, consideration and approval, to City Council, the naming and dedication.

Parks staff so noted that per City Public Parks and Park and Recreation Related Facilities naming policy, Resolution #874, "an individual who has contributed outstanding civic service to the City of Redmond and who has been deceased for a period of at least two years" is eligible. Mr. Meitzer will have been deceased for two years in April, 2005, at which time an appropriate plaque could be installed in the auditorium and become officially so named.

**IV. FISCAL IMPACT**

None.

**V. ALTERNATIVES**

- 1) The City Council may choose to amend the recommended name or send the issue back to the Park Board for further consideration.
- 2) The City Council may choose to approve the recommendation at which time the Parks and Recreation Department will advertise the recommendation for public comment for 30 days. If no comments are received within those 30 days, the request will take note and the auditorium will be so named and dedicated in honor of Mr. Meitzer.

**VI. TIME CONSTRAINTS**

No time constraint.

**VII. ATTACHMENTS**

- A. Mrs. Meitzer's letter of request to Mr. Hopkins
- B. JA American Newspaper Article – Dated July 31, 1987
- C. Commentary Article – Karl Thunemann

/s/ Danny Hopkins, Director of Parks and Recreation

Date: 04/05/2005

Approved for Council Agenda: /s/ Rosemarie Ives, Mayor

Date: 04/13/2005

Dear Mr. Hopkins,

I am writing to request that the theatre at the Redmond Senior Center be named in honor of my husband, Fred William Meitzer, former Redmond City Councilman.

Fred Meitzer died April 11, 2003, after a five year illness.

Fred served on the Council from 1984 through 1987. During those years, the Council was planning for the building of the Redmond Senior Center. Plans were to include "a tiny token of a stage."

Because of Fred's extensive work in Drama and his life-long love of the theatre, he was able to envision a truly workable theatre that would enhance the needs of the Seniors as well as serve the community. By sharing his vision with the other members of the Council, the original plans for a tiny token of a stage were dropped and his dream of a workable theatre became a reality.

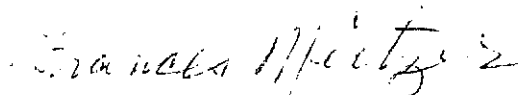
Upon its completion, Fred produced and directed the first play performed in the new theatre, "The Silver Whistle", in which then Mayor Doreen Marchione made a cameo appearance.

I am enclosing copies of the newspaper articles from the Journal-American July 31, 1987, which include photos and comments expressing excitement for this new Senior Center "which houses an outstanding facility for theatre."

Fred has always felt that this was his most important contribution while serving on the Redmond City Council.

I am asking for an exception to the rule of waiting two years after a death for granting such a request. The present Council members remember Fred Meitzer and his dedication to the City of Redmond. This is why I am urging consideration now.

Thank you for your aid in pursuing my request.



Frances Meitzer  
13764 N.E. 76<sup>th</sup> Place  
Redmond, WA 98052

# New theater part of Redmond senior center

By Freddie Brinster  
Journal-American Theater Critic

While Bellevue flounders in endless talk and feasibility studies, the city of Redmond acts.

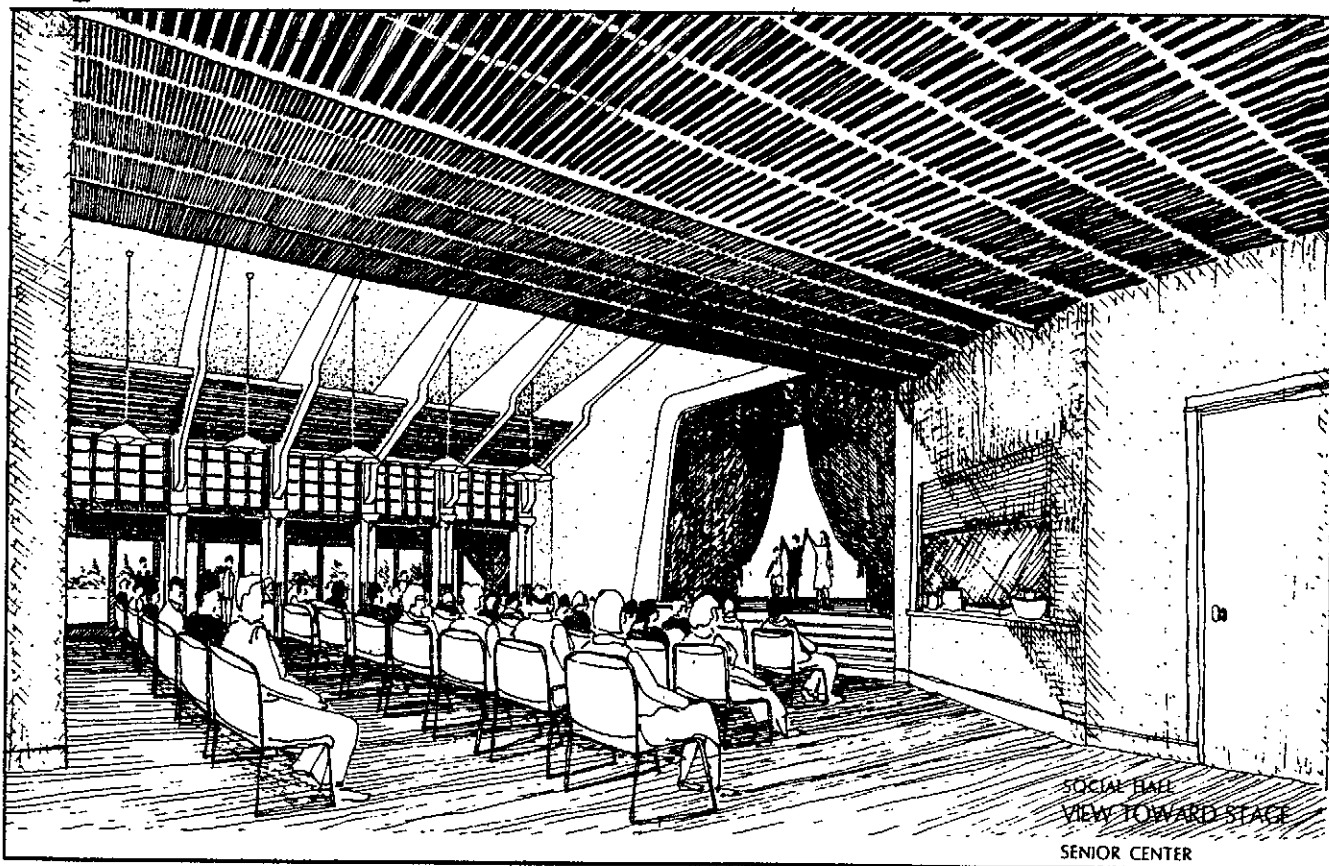
In September it will break ground for its new senior center, and sheltered beneath its north wing will be a small theater. Completion is expected in the summer of 1989. The 250 to 300 seat theater may go a long way toward filling the need for performance space of local music ensembles and community theater groups such as Redmond's Redwood Theatre.

As a production facility it will have its pluses and minuses. For example, the theater would comfortably accommodate most community theater productions such as those performed at the Village Theater. It will accommodate most plays but not those with huge casts, elaborate sets or special effects. You would not see a production of *Aida* with elephants and horses in this theater. But *Death of a Salesman* or *The Gin Game* would be no problem.

It is not intended to compete with Bellevue's proposed performing arts center. But from the standpoint of the arts community, a \$1 million theater in the hand may be worth more than a \$30 million theater in the bush.

A MAJOR PLUS is its location next to the Sammamish River Trail and Park, a choice spot in the city's developing 23-acre civic campus. Nearby will be a spacious

See "Theater" Page D2



The theater will serve multiple functions at the senior center, including plays on a 30-inch raised stage.

# Weekend

Journal-American

July 31, 1987

**D**

Reviews	4
Calendar	3
Movie log	4
Shorttimes	8

# Theater...

Continued from Page D1

brick-paved plaza stretching between the city hall and the senior center, ideal for summer concerts.

"A wonderful people place," says Tom Trueblood, the city park department's recreation division manager.

To the west of the theater a terrace is planned where theatergoers can stroll during intermission. Inside will be a proscenium stage 30-feet wide and 20-feet deep with wing space on each side. A 26-foot high ceiling will allow the hoisting of scenery above the stage; backstage facilities include a toilet, dressing and storage rooms. There will be lighting and sound equipment and a control booth. And next to the stage will be a 1,000-square-foot kitchen — an ideal situation for dinner theater.

The presence of the kitchen suggests the facility's only major drawback. It is a multi-use facility designed to accommodate a variety of activities, particularly senior functions. The floor is flat so that it can be used for dancing and for the daily serving of lunch for 200 people. Theater seating will consist of plastic molded stacking chairs which Trueblood insists will be "quite comfortable" despite lack of cushioning. Adequate sightlines will be achieved, more or less, by the 30-inch height of the stage. To insure safety, steps will extend all the way across the stage, descending to the floor.

ANOTHER likely problem will be scheduling, the catch-22 situation which means that the more the center is used for other senior activities the less it can be used for theater productions. In such a case, the senior activities will have priority.

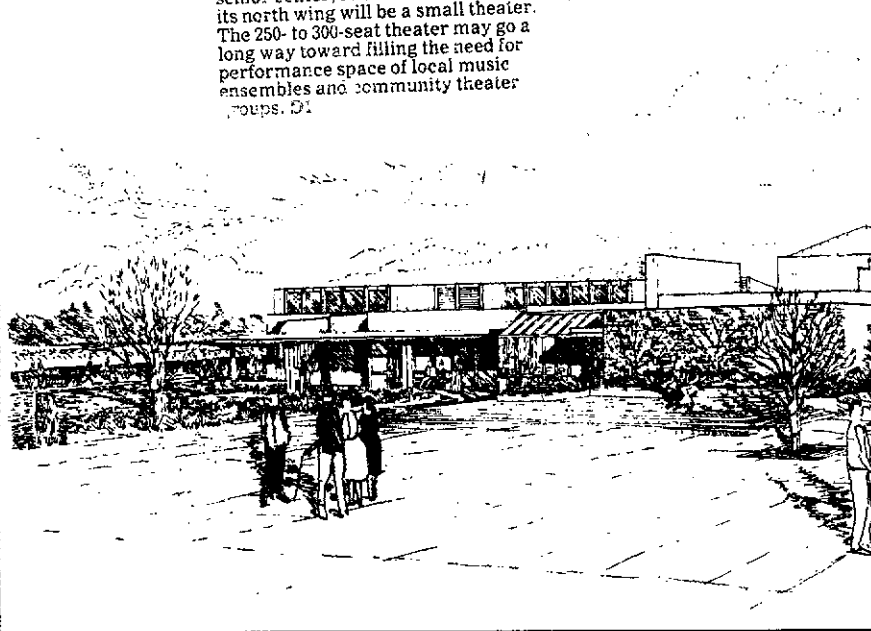
However, it is assumed — perhaps incorrectly — that few of these senior activities will occur at night. Melna Skillingstead, cultural arts coordinator for the Redmond Parks and Recreation Department who will be in charge of rentals, says it should be possible for groups to schedule three-to-four week performance runs if planning is done well in advance. Several groups have already expressed an interest in the theater including the Redwood Theatre and the Peccadillo Players (the Gilbert and Sullivan specialists headed by Bellevue's Penny Vrachopoulos).

One group that is not interested is the Bellevue Repertory Theatre. Artistic director Bonnie Wallace-Hoffman, who hopes to install her company in the proposed Eastside Performing Arts Center, wants to habituate her audience to coming to downtown Bellevue.

Compared with other Eastside facilities, this one will be less cushy than the Lee Theatre at Forest Ridge School or the Carco Theatre in Renton but far more accessible geographically. Though rental fees are yet to be determined, it will undoubtedly be considerably cheaper and more available to theater groups than the Carlson Theatre at BCC.

## Redmond to build theater

While Bellevue flounders in endless talk and feasibility studies, the city of Redmond will break ground for its new senior center, and sheltered beneath its north wing will be a small theater. The 250- to 300-seat theater may go a long way toward filling the need for performance space of local music ensembles and community theater groups. D1



A view to the northwest shows the entry flanked by a greenhouse on the left and the center's terrace.

## Where To Go To Put On A Show On the Eastside

	sloping floor	number seats	stage sz W x D x H	back-stage	wings	light, sound control booth	lobby	parking
Carco Theatre Renton	yes	300	39x36x14 thrust	minimal	minimal	yes	yes	yes
Carlson Theatre BCC	yes	299	40x30x25 thrust	yes	no	yes	yes	yes
Lee Theatre Forest Ridge School	yes	305	36x32x14½	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes
Snoqualmie Falls Forest Theatre — outdoor	yes	380	open space	yes	variable	yes	open space	yes
Showcase Theatre Lake Forest Park	yes	94	33x30x15	no	no	yes	yes	yes
St. Thomas Auditorium	yes	240	24x23x20	yes	minimal	yes	yes	yes
Taproot Theatre St. Thomas Center	yes	70	16x18x14 thrust	minimal	no	yes	yes	yes
Village Theatre Issaquah	yes	236	29x20x20	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes
Redmond Senior Center Theater	no	250	30x20x26	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes

### Fees:

Carco	— negotiable
Carlson	— \$300 for first four hours
Lee	— \$250 for four hours
Showcase	— expenses only
Snoqualmie Falls	— negotiable
St. Thomas	— \$200 per day
Taproot	— negotiable
Village	— \$100 per night
Redmond Center	— fees not set

INITIALLY, the plans for Redmond's senior center called for a tiny token of a stage, "suitable for an accordion player" but city councilman Fred Meitzer, former drama director at the University of Minnesota and now English instructor at Newport High School, persuaded his colleagues to budget an additional \$180,000 in order to build a workable theater.

Meitzer is elated and says, "I'd

like to direct the first play and I've already picked it out." His choice: Paul Osborne's funny and profound drama of oldsters, *Morning's At Seven*.

In the entire civic campus development, the city has exhibited exemplary foresight according to project manager John Nordquist of the city engineering department. "They are doing now what

they would not be able to do years from now," he says.

The city of Redmond forward-looking that it envied second theater, a 500-seat scale production facility, yet unfunded and undesired the architect's drawings campus show (in the upper corner) an area labeled theater."

# Thunemann

## Redmond Senior Center gives sense of community

In its new senior center, Redmond has created a solid piece of the sense of identity that always seems to be eluding the town.

That's a subjective judgment. But there was a sense of self-discovery at ceremonies to dedicate the new center. The dedication and open house were on Saturday. People have been gathering all week, notably on Tuesday evening to honor Dudley Carter, the artist, on his 99th birthday and to "unveil" his huge wooden sculpture, the Fantailed Bird, that hangs high on the wall of the building's foyer.

A growing, bustling city has many identities, which can't be focused in a single new building. Most Redmondites are busy, and won't think about the Senior Center until they're eligible to be among its patrons. But if a single structure can affect life all around it, the new center has been built to do just that.

For starters, the center is very inviting. I say this even though the landscaping isn't in, hoping that pedestrians



eventually will have sidewalks to reach the place — where now they have to take their chances on the access road or nip over from City Hall.

The building itself is a well-realized combination of useful large spaces and smaller meeting rooms, plus some nooks and crannies where you can buttonhole a friend for a little chat.

COMMUNITY GROUPS already are drooling over the potential of the compact theater built into the space that doubles as a dining room. And city officials acclaimed Fred Meitzer, former city council member, for insisting that the theater be included and then spared from cutbacks required to stay within budget.

Meitzer's former colleagues were eager to collect on his promise to direct the first play in the new facility. Meitzer said he'll deliver — and the first play will be *The Silver Whistle*.

Saturday's dedication really focused on the building, but Tuesday's ceremony suggested more of the possibilities of life at the center. For one thing, there was Dudley Carter himself, with six projects under way, busy in his studio seven days a week — and old enough to refer to other "seniors" as "Sonny."

And there was youth — 34 members of the Columbia Girls Choir, who sang with poise and gusto. A small facility like this is big enough to hold a crowd, and small enough to let you see each of the performers.

The Columbia choirs practice just outside of Redmond on Rose Hill, and for a third of the girls this was a hometown performance. Director Steve Stevens recognized the potential, and suggested that this might be the first of several visits to the Senior Center by singers under his direction.

What a ray of sunshine! It would create a sense of

generational continuity at the center — from Dudley Carter, to "young" seniors, to staff members to youngsters on the threshold of life.

If a sense of community identity really is rooted in the Senior Center, it arises from continuity — the young people singing to the older ones, and former council members such as Meitzer and Roger Trepanier using the occasion to note that they now number themselves among the ranks of senior citizens. (Ah, but we need a better term for it!)

SEEING PEOPLE of all ages together casts its own sense of timelessness. Among a crowd of girls and their mothers, a stately older woman seems to appear more herself — not old, but as she always looked — just as the grouping seems to draw forth an image of the women the little girls will someday be.

But peer groups do nicely, too, as seen in the 14 gray-haired singers of the Redmond Senior Chorus, on Friday. I'd like to see some men answer the challenge of Ted Cox, park board chairman, that they join the choir.

And I have a couple of challenges, too:

While the ceremonies were joyful, they could have incorporated more seniors who are active in the center. A few years back, delays in building the center brought out a certain feistiness among Redmond's seniors. Where has that quality gone? It should be invited in, rightfully a piece of the town's civic identity.

And for Steve Stevens: Put some of your Columbia girls on the stage with members of the senior chorus. That would be lots of fun, and a worthy way to cement a tie between the generations.

Karl Thunemann is editor of the Journal American editorial page. His column appears on Thursdays and Sundays.